

PRODUCED BY

Tennessee Arts Commission

Rich Boyd, Executive Director | Hal Partlow, Director of Performing Arts

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During the mid 1960s, there were limited arts organizations in place in Tennessee, and the role of state government in the arts was almost non-existent. With the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, all fifty states began to look at their cultural heritage in a different light and began promoting and supporting excellence in the arts. A few state arts agencies existed at that time, but with the establishment of the NEA many states began to organize arts groups.

The Tennessee General Assembly established the Tennessee Commission on the Performing Arts in 1966-67 whose members were primarily associated with the performing arts. While the name was later changed to reflect the inclusion of all arts disciplines, Tennessee's early cultural heritage is clearly identified by the performing arts. Theaters, halls, clubs, churches and opera houses across the state provided the necessary showcase venues and welcomed public participation.

The Tennessee Arts Commission has a long and proud history of providing support for artists, organizations and facilities engaged in presenting, promoting and preserving our rich cultural legacy. The publication of this book documenting the historic stages found in every region of the state is a testament to the Commission's commitment.

Rich Boyd

Executive Director | Tennessee Arts Commission

The performing arts in Tennessee are vibrant and varied, as are the historic stages which give them life. Some were designed and built as opulent performance halls, while others have been modified from humble beginnings to become venerated institutions. No matter the genesis, Historic Tennessee Stages is a reflection of the community in which they exist. They reinforce the identity and heritage of the people who inhabit them. Whether hosting traditional musicians, local community theater productions, or professional dance companies, Tennessee's historic stages have become more than a home to the singers, actors, and dancers who grace them. They mirror how communities value their own social, economic, historic and cultural identity.

The development of this project from its infancy to its completion captures the Tennessee Arts Commission's desire to create an architectural and cultural inventory of the historic performance venues found throughout our state. I am thankful to the members of the Tennessee Arts Commission staff who assisted with this project, especially Dennis Adkins, Lydia Light, Leigh Patton and Kim Leavitt. Special gratitude is also extended to Commission members and Executive Director Rich Boyd, for the resources to make this inventory possible. The publication of this book will be forever indebted to our friends, consultant F. Lynne Bachleda, and designer Tempie Farmer whose creativity is expressed within its pages.

Hal Partlow

Director of Performing Arts Program | Tennessee Arts Commission



HISTORIC TENNESSEE STAGES the forewords:





Our need to tell stories through theater, music, and dance is as basic as our need for clothing, shelter, and food. Through stories we increase and affirm our understanding of what it means to be human. We draw maps of where we've been, where we are, and where we want to go.

What all performed stories have in common is an inherent assertion: "Watch this, listen to this, see this. This is worth your time and resources. I have something worthy for you to behold." In fact, it is the Greek word for "behold," (theasthai), which gives us our modern word "theater." Building and maintaining theaters or performance halls is a ritual act. We are building temples, cherished spaces where we come together to witness the power of stories taking life within our human forms.

Other than the price of admission, theaters don't ask creed, nationality, profession, or status. Theaters are quintessentially community centers where, wrongful segregation years not withstanding, everyone is encouraged and welcomed to attend. Like public schools and libraries, they are among our most valued buildings.

For nearly two centuries Tennesseans have been building theaters as we know them. (Regrettably, this accounting does not address Native American architecture.) According to the *Tennessee Encyclopedia*, theaters date back to 1818 in Nashville. In 1830 Memphis patrons came to the Blue Ruin for a show. Nashville built the second largest venue in the country when the Adelphi Theater opened in 1850. That was a sign of the times. The 1850s saw a multitude of talents entertaining people in Knoxville and especially Memphis, where the Mississippi River brought theatricality to its shores.

Tennessee's theaters proliferated during the Victorian Age (1837-1901), especially after the Civil War. In the major cities, citizens could watch luminaries like Lillie Langtry, Edwin Booth, and Sarah Bernhardt. Entrepreneurs built theaters and "opera houses" across the state in smaller towns and county seats such as Pulaski. By 1900, Nashville had the Ryman Auditorium; Knoxville had Staub's (later the Bijou); and Memphis had the Grand Opera House.

The advent of motion pictures, of course, brought a new wave of "story temples," many extremely grand in their own right. Many of these elegant structures fell when television triumphed and movie traffic moved to suburban mall multi-screens. Some halls sat vacant for years and yet were somehow saved.

The trend now is for communities to come together and restore theaters, sometimes at great expense to replace even basic components such as walls and roofs. The trend is also for adaptations that will permit and encourage presenting multiple art forms: movies, plays, pageants, recitals, dances, and concerts. The rationale is often economic stimulus, but I suspect something deeper is at work. In preserving these special community artifacts I believe and hope that we express our wisdom that the stories told within these "temples" are forever worthy to behold.



HISTORIC TENNESSEE STAGES an introduction:



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HISTORIC TENNESSEE STAGES the parameters:



The initial concept was to document performance spaces of some age and therefore historical interest, notably those built before 1975. Ultimately appreciating this to be an arbitrary delineation, this report also includes newer venues such as the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. This accounting should always be viewed as a work in progress as some sites inevitably close (the Ritz in Covington), others are being revitalized to reopen at some point (the Franklin Theatre in Franklin), and new facilities are built.

Because Tennessee has a truly exceptional statewide musical heritage, there are many informal venues that are an outlet for this type of performance – too many to count, in fact. This study, therefore, has probed for places where theater, especially, and music and dance are thriving. Buildings listed are either legitimate full-time theatrical venues or are multi-use spaces that most often include the ability to screen movies. This is especially apparent in the restored/renovated movie houses that dot the state.

The internet was the primary research tool for this canvassing effort that also included considerable postal and email correspondence, plus telephone contacts. Special thanks to Claudette Stager at the Tennessee Historical Commission for her help with several properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In sum, as they have been for millennia all over the world, the performing arts are still vital and important across Tennessee. They make crucial connections among people within communities, towns, and cities of all types and sizes. Even when economics and difficulties seem to dictate other directions, we perennially hold fast to what the performing arts offer.

F. Lynne Bachleда January 2, 2010

N.B. The Tennessee Arts Commission regrets any omissions or errors in this first attempt to document the state's time-honored performance spaces. The Commission welcomes information on all performance venues that present more than motion pictures.



EASTERN GRAND DIVISION



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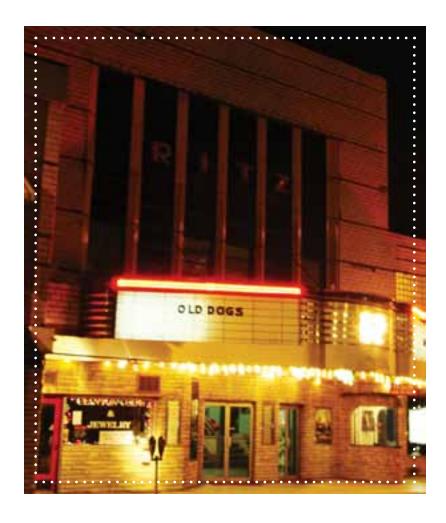
isted on the National Register of Historic Places, Bristol's Paramount opened in 1931. Seating 765, it originally mounted stage shows and motion pictures. It also hydraulically lifted a Mighty Wurlitzer organ from the orchestra pit to stage level. When a CinemaScope screen was installed in the 1950s the ornate proscenium arch was damaged and the Wurlitzer was removed. Now a rented organ rises from the pit. The theater continued to screen movies until 1979, when it was shuttered after decades reigning as the premier entertainment venue for Bristol.

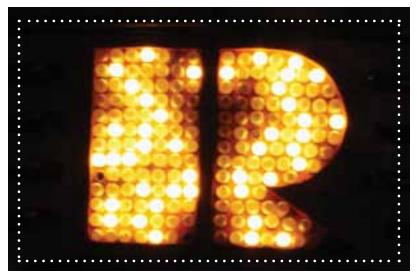
Restoration began in the 1980s, and more than \$2 million was spent on returning the Paramount to its former splendor. By knocking out a rear wall, the stage was enlarged to a depth of thirty-six feet. Reproductions of long-lost marquees now soar again over State Street. The venue is decorated in impressive Art Deco style, with interior touches of Venetian Renaissance decor.

The Paramount Center for the Arts, as it is now officially known as, has hosted Broadway shows and big-name concerts. It is also home to Theatre Bristol, the Piedmont Theatre Organ Society, the Bristol Ballet Company, and the Bristol Concert Choir. The Paramount is also used for civic functions and can be rented.











he Ritz Theater, designed by Hughes, Edd, Speight & Hibbs, was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1998. Located on Main Street across from the Anderson County Courthouse, the Ritz was constructed during World War II under the War Production Board, an acknowledgment of Clinton's close proximity to Oak Ridge.

When it opened in November 1945, it was called by many "the most modern theater in the South." During the heyday of the motion picture industry of the 1940s and early 1950s, it packed houses six days a week for all of the great movies of that era. As the movie industry dwindled during the late 1960s so did the Ritz. It closed its doors in 1969.

In 1972, a country music show call "The Red Speeks Show" started at the Ritz. Speeks hoped to rival the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. By 1987, however, the Speeks show faded into memory and the Ritz closed until 2000.

The Brock family purchased the theater and made its reopening a family project. They restored it to look like the classic theater it was in the 1940s. They repainted inside but preserved the original design. The Ritz is available for movies, concerts, gospel sings, weddings, receptions and other meetings.



SOLDIERS AND SAILORS MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM

399 McCallie Avenue * Chattanooga Hamilton County





emorial Auditorium was designed as a municipal auditorium and all-purpose exhibition hall. Architect R.H. Hunt designed the structure and the City of Chattanooga built it for \$700,000. Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Auditorium opened on February 22, 1924 as a living memorial to Hamilton County war veterans.

For forty years the Auditorium served as Chattanooga's primary meeting hall and greatest capacity indoor entertainment venue. Its flat floor and flexible seating allowed it to accommodate a wide variety of events, including boxing matches, roller derby, ice shows, religious revivals, tennis tournaments, circuses, and even aquacades. It also hosted dances, banquets, civic meetings, political rallies, and Chattanooga's annual Cotton Ball.

By the 1960s Memorial Auditorium was in desperate need of repair. The 1966 renovation added escalators and air conditioning, and converted the basement-level parking garage into exhibit space. By 1985 the facility's mission had changed. Instead of trying to do everything passably, Memorial Auditorium would concentrate on doing one thing well – fill Chattanooga's need for a mid-sized theater and concert venue.

After an eighteen-month renovation, the Auditorium was re-dedicated in January 1991. Improvements included new dressing rooms, a hydraulic orchestra lift, state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems, increased stage depth, and a sloped concert hall floor with permanent seating and greatly improved sightlines. In July 2007 the Auditorium's restored historic concert pipe organ was rededicated. For over eighty years, the venue has hosted religious festivals, political rallies, debutante galas, opera, musicals, and concerts.



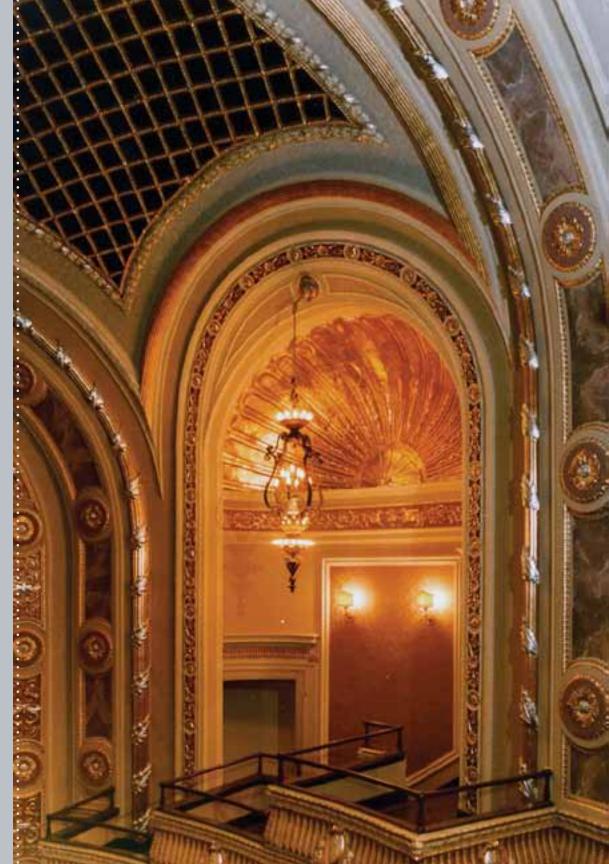


n December 1963 Paul Crabtree presented *The Perils of Pinocchio* at the Crossville Junior High School with a cast, crew, and orchestra of 200 youngsters. The performance electrified the community.

Civic and cultural leaders asked Crabtree how they could keep things like *Pinocchio* happening in Crossville. He replied, "Well, you'd have to build a theater." Remarkably, Crossville, a town of 5,000 in a county of 25,000, did exactly that. The Cumberland County Playhouse is now the only major nonprofit professional performing arts resource in rural Tennessee, and one of the ten largest professional theaters in rural America. It serves more than 145,000 visitors annually with two indoor and two outdoor stages, young audience productions, a comprehensive dance program, a concert series, and touring shows.

The Playhouse features nearly 500 performances and 1,600 classes in theatre, music, and dance annually. Combining a resident professional company and a staff of sixteen with more than 100 visiting professionals and a large volunteer corps, the Playhouse draws professionals from across the country and volunteers from a dozen Tennessee counties. Over fifty percent of all revenues are expended for professional artist compensation. Since 1965 the Playhouse has been managed and directed by two generations of the Crabtree family, beginning with Paul and Mary.





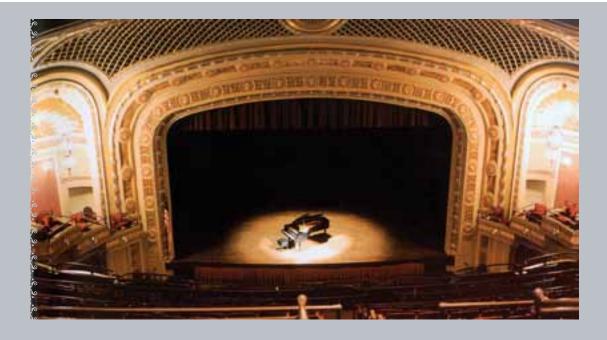


he Tivoli, known as the "Jewel of the South," opened on March 19, 1921. The completion cost was close to \$1 million – then a very lavish sum. The Tivoli's Beaux Arts style interior reflected the popular look for movie palaces of the 1920s: a high domed ceiling, grand lobby, crystal chandeliers, and an elegant foyer. Designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Rapp and Rapp, the Tivoli accommodated silent movies and live productions. In 1924 a \$30,000 Wurlitzer organ arrived.

From the 1920s through the 1940s the Tivoli reigned as Chattanooga's premier movie and variety theater. Forced to close in 1961, the Tivoli narrowly escaped demolition.

In 1963 the Tivoli reopened after a partial renovation. By 1974 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the City of Chattanooga purchased it in 1976 for \$300,000. Ten years later a \$7,000,000 renovation began. The Tivoli reopened to rave reviews in 1989 with its cosmetic overhaul; additional fourteen feet of stage depth; dressing rooms for seventy performers; sound and lighting systems; hydraulic lift orchestra pit; and new "green room" and rehearsal facilities.

The Tivoli is home to the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera Association, and it welcomes a wide variety of road tours each year. At the center of Chattanooga's cultural life, the Tivoli's elegance and intimacy make it a favorite. (Thanks to Onstage Chattanooga.com/Tivoli.php)





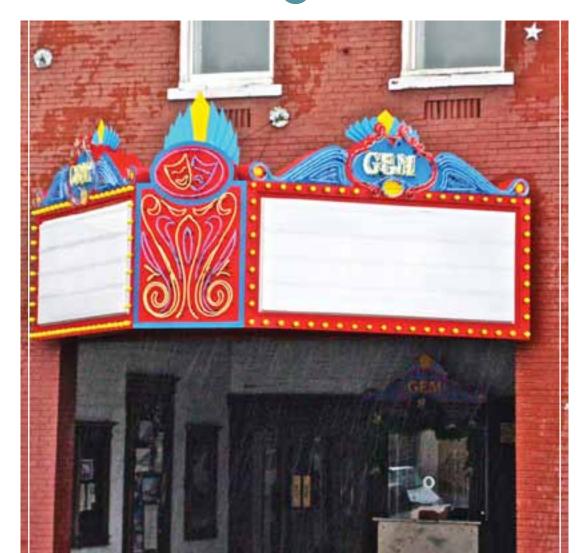
he building now known as the Gem Theater was built in 1906. It occupied one-half of a brick duplex structure fifty by seventy feet and was then the largest building in Etowah. The owner rented the lower half of the building to the postmaster, who established a clothing store and a millinery shop for making women's hats.

After several years the postmaster acquired the entire building but eventually sold the building in 1918 to Hugh V. Manning, who converted the building into a theater in 1927. Manning named the theater "The Gem" to honor his home town of Marietta, Georgia which was called "The Gem City."



The Gem was remodeled in 1927 at a cost of \$75,000, and became one of the most beautiful show houses of its size in East Tennessee and North Georgia. It first showcased movies and vaudeville acts. In 1929 a portion of the building was modified to house the Gem Drug Store business. After a stint as The Martin Theater, the city purchased the building in 1993. Since then volunteers, grants, and donations restored the theater that now serves as the home of the Gem Players.





wner Bill Garrison opened the Palace on November 21, 1938 featuring the Ronald Coleman classic movie *If I Were King*. During World War II the Palace helped to promote everything from war bond sales to scrap metal drives. In addition to movies, the Palace Theatre hosted many live entertainment events over the years including beauty pageants and an appearance by cowboy movie star Bob Steele and his trained horse.

The Palace continued to show first run films in the 1960s and 1970s. After it closed in 1978 the roof and windows of the stately old theater began to deteriorate. Still the Palace's Art Deco and Art Modern architecture, neon marquee, and locally quarried native Crab Orchard stone façade made it distinct.

Downtown Crossville, Inc. (DCI) spearheaded the successful drive in the 1990s to save "the jewel of Main Street." The city purchased the Palace Theatre property in 1993, and the next year it was listed on the National Historic Register of Historic Places. The Palace reopened in a grand ceremony in February 2001, Crossville's Centennial year. Its restoration lead to other downtown improvements.

The Palace Theatre is now a flexible community auditorium that can show 35mm classic movies, host concerts from classical to rock, beauty pageants, business meetings, school programs and more. (Thanks to writer Jim Young for invaluable knowledge.)











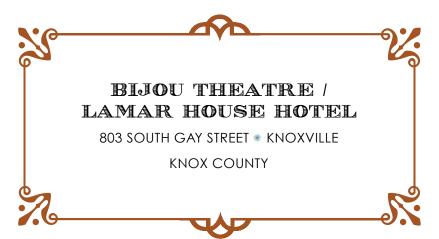


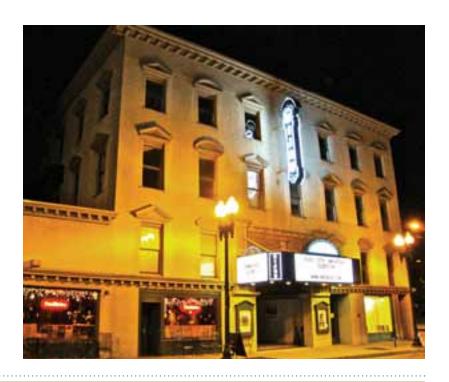


he 700-plus-seat Bijou Theatre opened March 8, 1909 as part of an already existing hotel known as the Lamar House. Built in 1817 as a hotel and tavern, the Lamar House is the fourth oldest building in Knoxville. Little Johnny Jones starred as George M. Cohan on the Bijou's opening night. Performers such as the Marx Brothers and Dizzy Gillespie graced the stage with vaudeville, opera, comedy, and more during the years.

After years mounting musical theater, the Bijou's previous owners defaulted on their mortgage loans and other bills. The theater avoided foreclosure in early 2005 when two Knoxville businessmen stepped in to renegotiate the loan. Knoxville Mayor Bill Haslam took the lead in raising an estimated \$2.1 million in funds to address the building's structural deterioration, mechanical systems, and accessibility issues, plus eliminate or reduce liabilities and create a two-year operating reserve. The Federal and Georgian-style theater closed for almost a year to repair water damage, upgrade the heating and air, refurbish the auditorium seats, and outfit the stage with state-of-the-art sound, lighting and curtain systems.

On June 2, 2006, the Bijou Theatre, now on the National Register of Historic Places, reopened as a vital participant in Knoxville's thriving downtown. For a detailed history and an account of its tradition of paranormal activity, please refer to TNSeeParanormal.com/KnoxvilleBijou.html.







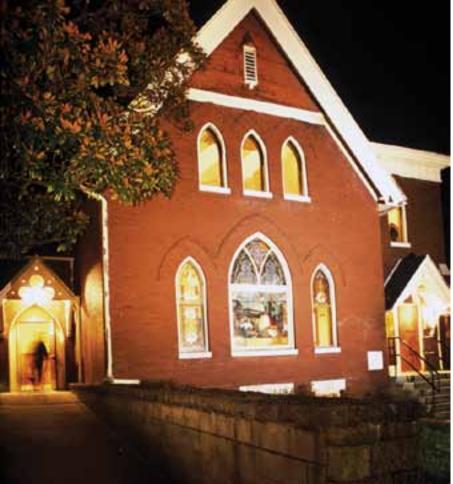
he University of Tennessee is one of just seventeen universities nationwide with its own professional theater associated with the League of Resident Theatres. Under the administration of the University of Tennessee Theatre Department, the Clarence Brown complex has three theaters.

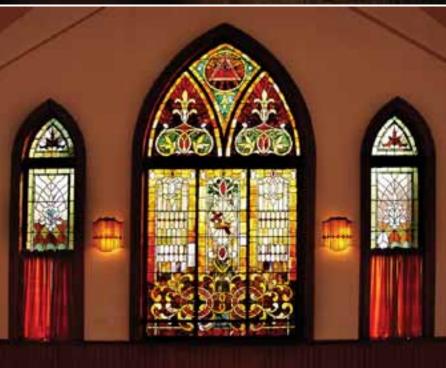
The main Clarence Brown Theatre presents a wide variety of theatrical and dance performances by faculty, students, and professional guest artists. It is a 581-seat proscenium theatre built in 1970 dedicated to Clarence Brown, distinguished film director and UT alumnus. Located in the center of the UT campus, the Clarence Brown houses extensive costume and properties collections, as well as light, sound, scene, and costume shops. The theatre provides access and seating for the physically challenged, and listening systems for deaf and hearing impaired people.

The Ula Love Doughty Carousel Theatre is an intimate, versatile 400-seat arena space, featuring flexible seating and staging. Located next to the Clarence Brown Theatre, the Carousel Theatre was renamed in 1991 in tribute to Mrs. Doughty, a devoted patron who provided for the building's future.

The Clarence Brown Lab Theatre is a 100-seat black box venue located inside The Clarence Brown Theatre. The Lab Theatre is home to the undergraduate group, All Campus Theatre, plus a variety of undergraduate and graduate projects and productions.









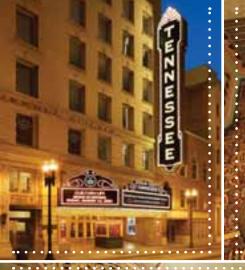
ort Sanders is the heart of old time residential Knoxville, evocatively described in Knoxvillian James Agee's *A Death in the Family*. The Laurel Theater is an important cultural center in the heart of that neighborhood, now listed as a Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places.

Completed in 1898, the Laurel Theater stood for many years as the Fort Sanders Presbyterian Church. When the original Presbyterian congregation became inactive, an ecumenical urban ministry was founded to serve the community. The Epworth Ecumenical congregation held services in the building for many years.

The Epworth group, now inactive, left a legacy in the Knoxville cultural scene by creating Jubilee Community Arts. With a focus on traditional performing arts, Jubilee provides a way for people to celebrate the shared heritage of the Fort Sanders community, Tennessee, and the Appalachians. The building was nearly destroyed by fire in 1982 but restored thanks to the generous efforts of many in the community and with financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts. The present-day Laurel Theater incorporates both the gracious peacefulness of the old church and the spacious feel of the art center. Upper left photo courtesy of @murraylee.com. Lower left and lower right photos of @InFocus Photography















604 SOUTH GAY STREET * KNOXVILLE
KNOX COUNTY



ailed as "the South's most beautiful theatre," the magnificent Tennessee Theatre opened October 1, 1928. When the first silver screen adult patrons stepped inside they paid forty cents for movie matinees and sixty cents for evening shows. Children paid ten and fifteen cents.

Designed by Chicago architects Graven & Mayger, the Theatre has a Spanish-Moorish style interior that incorporates Czechoslovakian crystals in the French-style chandeliers; Italian terrazzo flooring in the Grand Lobby; and Asian influences in the carpet and drapery. The Tennessee was one of the first public places in Knoxville to have air-conditioning.

After periodic closings in the late 1970s, James A. Dick purchased the building in 1981. The Tennessee began its gradual shift from a single-screen movie theater to a multi-use performing arts venue. This prolonged its existence, but exaggerated its many shortcomings. In June 2003 the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation began a \$25.5 million restoration and renovation. On January 15, 2005 the former movie palace reopened as a world-class performing arts center.

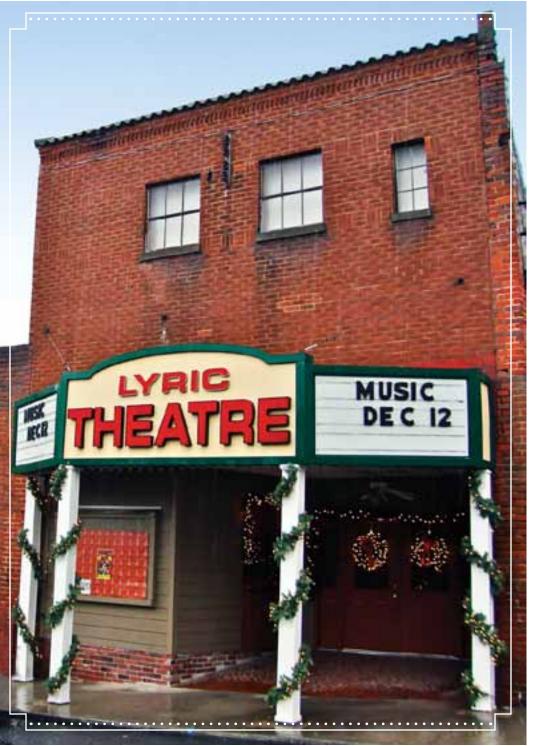
Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and honored as the Official State Theatre of Tennessee, today's Tennessee Theatre offers music, vintage films, dance, drama, and stellar musical performances. Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, Knoxville Opera, and the University of Tennessee Cultural Attractions use the Tennessee Theatre throughout the year.



he screen lit up with the first scene of Angel o'er Hello Valley. Movie fans silently read captions on the screen in their new "palace of dreams." Built in 1911-1912, the Lyric Theatre was always an important part of Loudon's community, but movies were only a part of its offerings. The story goes that once a hypnotist came to town and put a man to sleep on the stage at the Lyric Theatre. The man was placed on a cot and moved to Ed Watkins Dry Goods Store front window for display. When night came, he was taken back to the theater where the hypnotist proceeded to wake him up!

The original Lyric Theatre burned down in 1934 and was rebuilt. Plagued by fire, the theater burned again around 1941.

The last family to own and operate the theater, the Morgans bought it in the mid-1950s. The final movie was screened in 1961. Jimmie N. Morgan donated the theater to the City of Loudon in the 1980s. Since then the Loudon Merchants and Property Owners Association (LMPOA) has restored the theater, which consisted of only four brick walls. Improvements include a roof, HVAC system, stage curtains, sound and lighting systems, marquee, carpet, and renovated bathrooms. The first concert series was held in 2003. The Lyric now offers live music and theatrical programming.



n February 1920, Mr. R. F. M. Kirkpatrick acquired two lots (each twenty-five by one hundred forty feet) for a theater designed and built by local architect Reece B. Patton. The Princess Theatre building, formerly known as the Imperial and later as the Palace, "rises from the ashes" of these previous incarnations on Cedar Avenue in downtown South Pittsburg.

In 1921 the Imperial Theatre opened for business screening the silent film *Tank Town Follies*, starring South Pittsburg native Ms. Jobyna Ralston. After several owners and name changes culminating with "Princess" around 1947 the theater took on Art Deco styling and a neon-lighted marquee was added.

The Princess Theatre closed in 1963. In 1976 it reopened as Valley Cinema. This name only lasted a few years. Subsequently, the Princess was vacant with little maintenance until the 1990s when a church rented the structure.

After sitting vacant for several more years, by 1999 the roof had collapsed and a portion of the north wall was in danger of doing the same. Concerned citizens began a drive to salvage the historic theater for a community arts center. The City of South Pittsburg purchased the theater and appointed a commission to restore it. In 2009 the end was in sight: a fine community auditorium for concerts, movie festivals, recitals, pageants, plays, businesses, and once again, community pride. (Thanks to Dennis Lambert e² South Pittsburg Preservation Society, Inc.)







heetrock hanging from the ceiling, old musty curtains, dilapidated light fixtures, rotted stairs to the stage, old green painted vinyl seats ... This was the condition of the Palace when Steve Kaufman and Donna Dixon purchased it. They replaced or restored everything to a 1934 look and added modern heat and air, plumbing, and electrical systems.

Based on the original 1868 drawings of the building, Steve Kaufman carefully restored the former Flanze building's second floor. Top crowns and windows were replaced as a part of the preparation for the new marquee. Thanks to Mark Neumann, the old candy counter lost its thirteen layers and paint, and the 35mm and 16mm projectors are restored so they can screen old shorts like Flash Gordon or the Three Stooges.

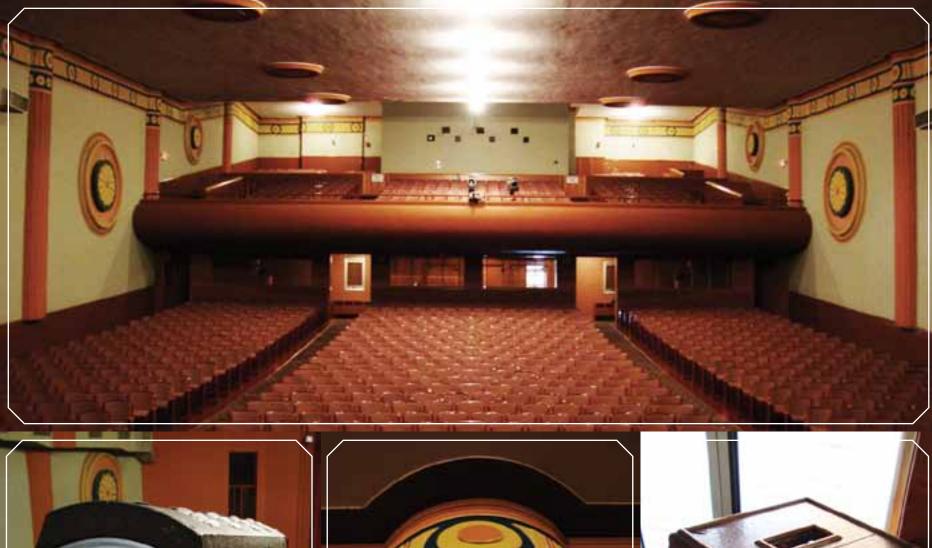
The Palace Theater would be incomplete without the beacon that lights the way – the marquee. The new sign has flashing lights, red neon clocks at both ends, yellow neon lettering, and spot lights under the structure. When it was delivered for installation, the street was blocked, the media appeared, and people parked in the lot across the street with lawn chairs to make a day of the event.

To crown the comeback success, Blount County citizens voted the lobby bar to have the "Best Coffee, Lattes and Espresso in Town." Patrons now sip and enjoy bluegrass, folk, jazz, and blues, children's programming, and vintage films at the Palace.



















The Middle Tennessee counties of Bedford, Cannon, Cheatham, Clay, Coffee, Davidson, DeKalb, Dickson, Fentress, Franklin, Giles, Grundy, Hickman, Houston, Humphreys, Jackson, Lawrence, Lewis, Lincoln, Macon, Marshall, Maury, Montgomery, Moore, Overton, Perry, Pickett, Putnam, Robertson, Rutherford, Sequatchie, Smith, Stewart, Sumner, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren, Wayne, White, Williamson, and Wilson.

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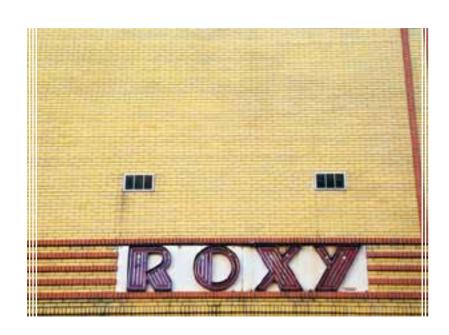


he 1912 Lillian was Clarksville's first theater on the corner of Franklin and First, and it was rebuilt after a 1913 fire. Upon entering the white and green enamel brick Italianate facade, patrons enjoyed a lobby sparkling with glass plate mirrors and 300 electric lights. The auditorium had 650 opera chairs, hand-painted murals, and a projection screen of rough Russian linen impregnated with gold, bronze, and mercury amalgam. Fire took the Lillian again in 1945, but the theater was rebuilt as The Roxy. A new type of lighting – neon – highlighted the sleek exterior. The Roxy entertained Clarksvillians with first run movies from 1947 until 1980.

It sat vacant for three years until Tom Thayer and John McDonald opened The Roxy Regional Theatre on November 3, 1983 featuring dinner and live performances. Two years later the theater became a non-profit organization with a volunteer board of directors who owns the building and oversee activities.

In 1995 a massive \$80,000 renovation took place that restructured the lobby and the auditorium (a 153-seat main stage and a 50-seat black box). That same year the Roxy Professional Company formed to supply the great demand for Shakespeare, Greek classics, school curriculum and holiday shows. The community season includes summer fare while the professional season is dedicated to bringing classics to the stage. Since 1983 the Roxy has hosted more than 250 main stage theatrical productions.









Maury County Arts Guild has been supporting and promoting arts within the community and surrounding area. The Arts Guild was organized in 1970 as a means for those interested in pooling their cultural resources. The Guild offers performing and visual arts, crafts, and a literary reading and writing club. The visual arts gallery mounts shows several times a year.

Established in 1972 by a group of residents who wanted to promote free expression of the arts, the arts guild made its first home in an old house on West Seventh Street. Eventually the guild outgrew the house, and in 1986 it moved to its current facility on Lion Parkway that

features classrooms, offices, a 225-seat performing arts wing, dressing rooms, a meeting room, and an art gallery.

The arts guild's performing arts committee presents five shows each season, running from August through May. One show each season is directed by the Maury County Teen Arts Guild. Art classes are offered based on demand at the arts guild, and a five-day theater camp for children is held each summer. A favorite annual event is the arts guild's "Follies Review" in August when local musicians put on a sellout show.

(Based in part on a story by Jessica Mozo on Maury County Visions of Journal Communications.)

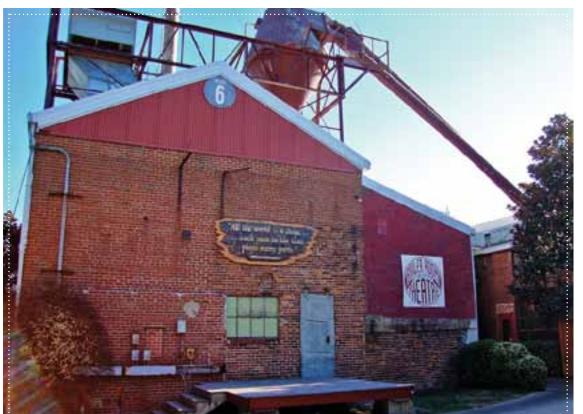




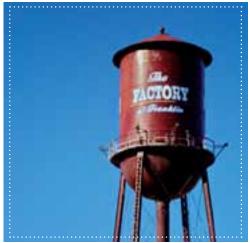
he Factory at Franklin is a complex of eleven depression-era buildings with a total of 250,000 square feet that housed four different factories over its industrial lifetime. The buildings were built for the Allen Manufacturing Company (stove manufacturers) in 1929. After Allen Manufacturing went into receivership during the Great Depression, the Dortch Stove Company (1932-1955), Magic Chef (1955-1959) and Jamison Bedding Company (1962-1991) successively occupied the site that is on the National Register of Historic Places. Franklin businessman Calvin LeHew renovated The Factory as a dining, retail, and entertainment center. He intended to retain as much as possible of the old factory look in each building.

Renovations to the old boiler room at The Factory began in November 2000. The theater opened on March 16, 2001. Alterations and repairs included replacing the bulging brick wall adjacent to what was formerly the "sawdust room" (now the theater lobby); getting rid of many support beams and posts and the old restroom; removing the old boilers from what is now the backstage area and dressing rooms; and, in keeping with the flavor of The Factory, displaying one of the smaller boilers outside the theater and using it as unique signage.

The Boiler Room Theatre, Williamson County's first resident professional theater, was founded by Jamey Green, Lewis Kempfer, Corbin Green and Teressa Howell.





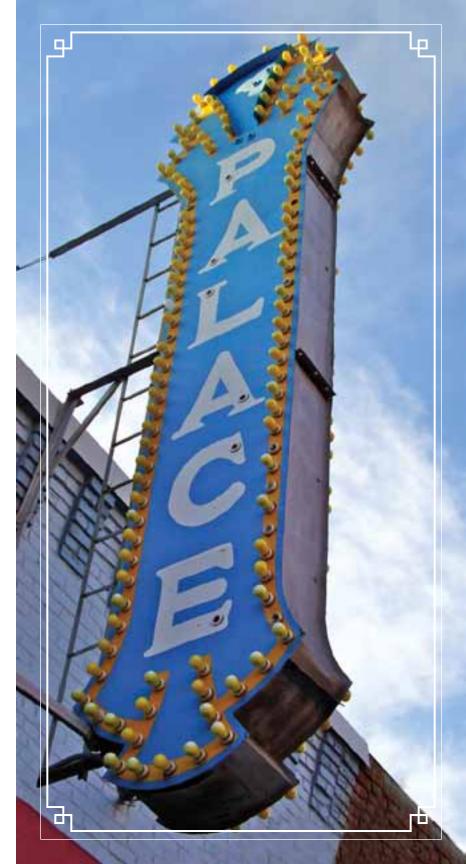




wned and operated by Bill Roth, the Palace Theater thrived as a community theater from 1913 until 1977. During these years the Palace was a focal point on the historic downtown square. After Mr. Roth's death in the early 1990s, the theater was purchased at auction by Johnny and Sonny Garrott and subsequently donated for renovation to Greater Gallatin, Inc. The property is the state's oldest silent movie theater still standing in its original location. Consequently, it was designated a local historic landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Private, public, corporate, and state donors raised more than \$100,000 for the renovation project. Greater Gallatin Inc. received a much-needed grant for \$300,000 making the dreams for the Palace a reality. Seven years later Greater Gallatin, Inc. opened the Palace Theater doors to the public. Once again it was a viable part of downtown.

The Palace shows movies every weekend. The theater is also available for lectures, recitals, concerts, and rental opportunities. The historic theater's charm and ambience makes it a weekend destination for many in the Sumner community.



he amphitheater stage is a rectangle of short piers connected by logs. It has two fireplaces positioned to warm the performers. Standing Stone's amphitheatre has a scenic background and is used for meetings, campfires, musical gatherings, and even small weddings. It seats around 100 people and requires a park reservation.

The federal Works Progress Administration developed Standing Stone during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the Civilian Conservation Corps constructed its rustic architecture. Park development by the WPA centered around a sixty-acre, man-made lake. In 1938 state plans called for a \$53,213 expenditure to construct recreational facilities, including cabins, an amphitheater, a boathouse, a recreation hall, picnic shelters, a pump house, the park entrance sign, a group camp, and trails and roads. Most of the historic buildings, including the amphitheater, are constructed of hewn logs and rest on rock-faced coursed stone foundations.

The park takes its name from the Standing Stone, an eight-foot tall rock standing upright on a sandstone ledge. According to legend, it marked a boundary line between two Indian nations. When the rock fell, Native Americans placed a portion of it on an improvised monument to venerate it. The stone is now preserved in nearby Monterey, Tennessee.







awrenceburg's art deco Crockett Theatre, designed by Parkes, William Speight and Hibbs, was built in 1950. Complete with a custom-laid terrazzo lobby floor, it is one of the few theaters from this era still operating in the United States. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it has been lovingly refurbished by the Crockett Theatre Board and is actively used for performances and conferences.

Groups such as The Singing Carter Family with Mother Maybelle and the Carter girls have performed here. Reel-to-reel features such as *Gone with the Wind, Smokey and the Bandit,* and Elvis movies have entertained full houses with over 800 patrons. Many children who grew up in Lawrenceburg fondly remember being on stage for dance recitals, band competitions, and other community events. Today, the stage is named to honor the work of Emmy Award-winning actor Michael Jeter, a native of Lawrenceburg. His many outstanding performances include *Grand Hotel,* for which he won a Tony Award, *The Green Mile, Evening Shade,* and appearances on *Sesame Street*.

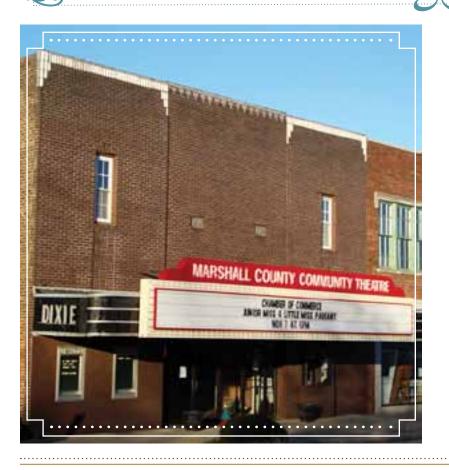






DIXIE THEATRE / MARSHALL COUNTY COMMUNITY THEATRE

110 WEST CHURCH STREET * LEWISBURG * MARSHALL COUNTY



n 1913 M.P. Boyd built the Dixie as a silent movie house with an all-purpose stage. At that time the Dixie was located on the east side of the town square. After burning in 1924, the building was soon renovated and remained in business until 1938 when the theater was moved to the north side of the town square.

Marshall County residents have used the theater's stage for plays, beauty pageants, and talent shows. A number of stars have performed on it, including Al "Fuzzy" Saint John, Smiley Burnett, Tom Mix, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, and PeeWee King. A member of the James gang once delighted patrons with a shooting exhibition.

Although renovated several times over, the Dixie finally closed its doors to patrons in 1985. Marshall County Community Theatre purchased the Dixie in 1994 and renovated its interior. The theatre seats 299 and is booked with rehearsals and performances over 200 days a year. An active children's theater group also operates out of the Dixie. Outstanding guest artists include Mark O'Connor, The Fisk Jubilee Singers, and the Nashville Symphony.

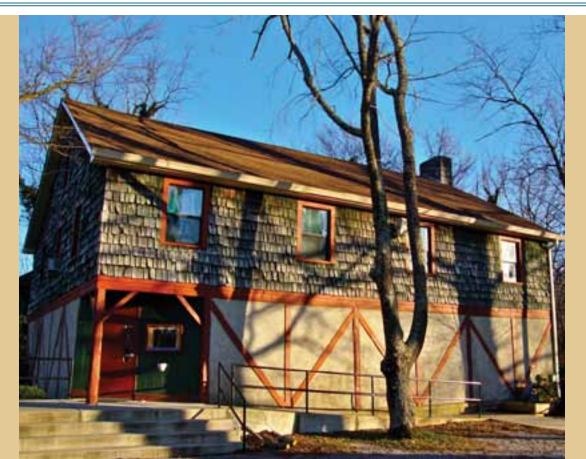
or the second time, Murfreesboro Little Theatre (MLT) calls a quaint log building home. The National Youth Administration (NYA), a New Deal agency, constructed it in 1939 to be a scout lodge. The edifice began its performing arts life in 1967 or 1968 when Murfreesboro Little Theatre made it their home. Their first production was *Stop the World*, *I Want to Get Off!*

After moving in the mid-to-late 1990s to a funeral home's hearse garage and then the VA Medical Center's auditorium, in 2008 Murfreesboro Little Theatre returned to its first home. The basement holds dressing rooms and set design pieces. A trap door in its ceiling leads upstairs to the first floor's stage. The second floor has offices, a sewing room, and a kitchen. Costume storage lines the hallways. Prop storage is on the third floor. As do many theaters, the MLT has rumors of a ghost.

With an open audition policy, the group has staged such modern classics as *Ordinary People* and *The Laramie Project*. The log building also hosts summer camps for acting and technical theater.

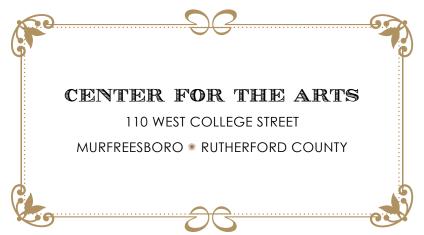












n 1909 the old livery station at 110 W. College Street was torn down. The U.S. Department of Treasury built an Italianate structure on the site to serve as the post office. In 1962 this became the Linebaugh Library. After the library relocated, the building was renovated to become the Center for the Arts. The adaptation contains a 150-seat theater, an art gallery, and a dance studio. The multi-use renovation earned a Governor's Award for Economic and Community Development.

The new Center for the Arts opened December 1, 1995. It presents theatrical productions, visual art exhibitions, music concerts, dance performances, and educational classes. The Art Gallery changes exhibits quarterly with shows by area high school students, the Murfreesboro Rutherford Art League, and group shows for local artists.

The mission for the Center for the Arts, Inc. is to enhance the quality of the community by providing a variety of arts and opportunities to educate and entertain people of all ethnicities, ages, and income levels. The Center for the Arts advances art awareness through quality theatrical productions, musical performances, art exhibits, educational programs, life-long learning and community activities, thus improving overall quality of life in Rutherford County.



nown first in 1925 as the Hillsboro Theater that screened silent movies, the venue then boasted the city's most modern equipment and largest stage. By the 1930s the Nashville Children's Theatre and the Grand Ole Opry called it home. In 1937 it became the Nashville Community Playhouse and functioned much as it currently does, offering live performances and movies. In 1966 The Belcourt Cinema returned to its origins as a movie house, and was successful for nearly thirty years. Under pressure from multi-screen shopping centers, by 1993 it was Nashville's last traditional neighborhood movie house.

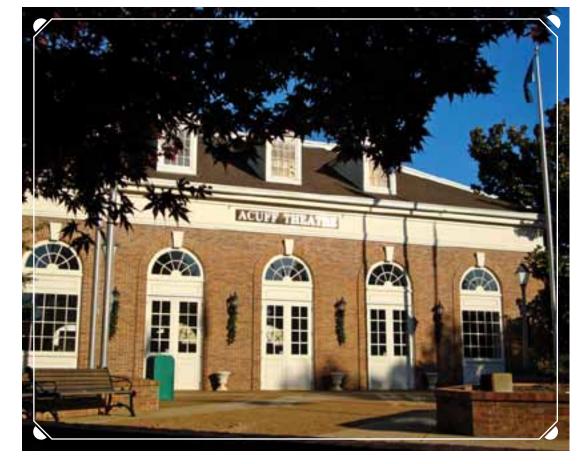
When Carmike's lease expired in 1997, Watkins Film School stepped in to join Belcourt LLC with strong programming. Lacking a cohesive audience base however, the Watkins Belcourt closed in 1999. Sparked in part by Jim Ridley's Nashville Scene article, the organization Belcourt YES! emerged to revive the venue. In 2003 Thomas Wills purchased the theater to sell it at no profit to Belcourt YES! in 2007. The Belcourt is now once again recognized as a unique cultural icon and as Nashville's choice for the best foreign, independent, and classic film; great musical and dance performances; cutting-edge live theater; and unique programming for kids and their families.













pryland's smaller theater is named for the legendary Opry star Roy Acuff, who lived within a long stone's throw from the theater when he moved onto the Opryland campus in the early 1970s. The Acuff Theatre is 114 feet wide and forty-five feet deep.

The NBC talent search program, "Nashville Star" hosted by Billy Ray Cyrus, has been filmed there since its inception in 2003. In 2008 this longest-running cable reality competition series moved into the spotlight on NBC. The seventh season of "Nashville Star" premiered on NBC June 2009, followed by 90-minute live episodes each week. Each contestant turns to the celebrity panel that will not only judge them during the live shows, but will also provide a unique mentoring aspect.

"Nashville Star" is the grassroots talent search to find America's next great country music star. In 2008 over 45,000 (more than double those who auditioned for the fifth season) auditioned to make their dreams come true for the season. "Nashville Star" is created by Reveille and produced by 495 Productions.







CENTENNIAL PARK BANDSHELL

WEST END AVENUE AT 25TH AVENUE, NORTH
NASHVILLE * DAVIDSON COUNTY







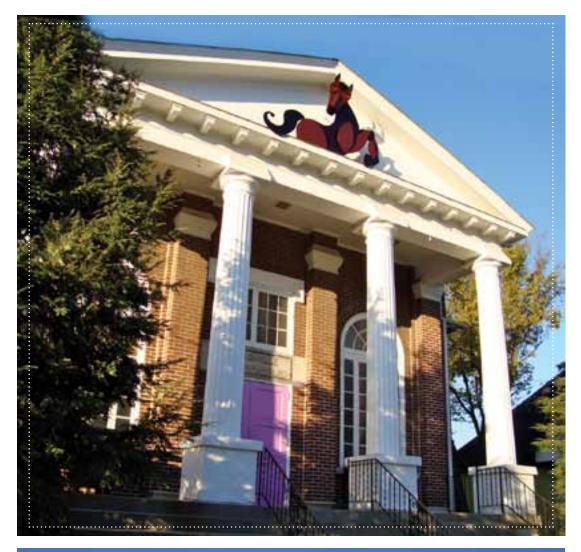
n July 25, 1937 electric organist Leon Cole stepped out on Centennial Park's bandshell stage and introduced himself to a handful of Nashvillians scattered on the lawn. His idea was to offer free outdoor summer concerts. The concept caught on and concert attendance grew in the following weeks. *The Tennessean's* publisher, Silliman Evans Sr., agreed to sponsor the event. For the next thirty-two years music filled Centennial Park on summer Sunday afternoons.

In early years the concerts featured mostly community singers and amateur musicians. Following World War II, the park concerts began attracting well-known stars as Nashville became a major recording center.

The featured performers were a "Who's Who" of popular and country music: Minnie Pearl, Roger Miller, Tex Ritter, Chet Atkins, Brenda Lee, The Jordanaires, The Everly Brothers, Mother Maybelle and the Carter Family, Bill Monroe, Ray Stevens, Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, Marty Robbins, Boots Randolph, among many others.

Dozens of young artists got their start at the park's bandshell. The most successful was Pat Boone. Both Pat and his wife, Shirley Foley (daughter of country star Red Foley), were "Discoveries of the Week" in the early 1950s.

Another continuing tradition started in 1988 with the Nashville Shakespeare Festival's production of As You Like It. The bandshell continues to be the summer home of NSF's fine and free programming.

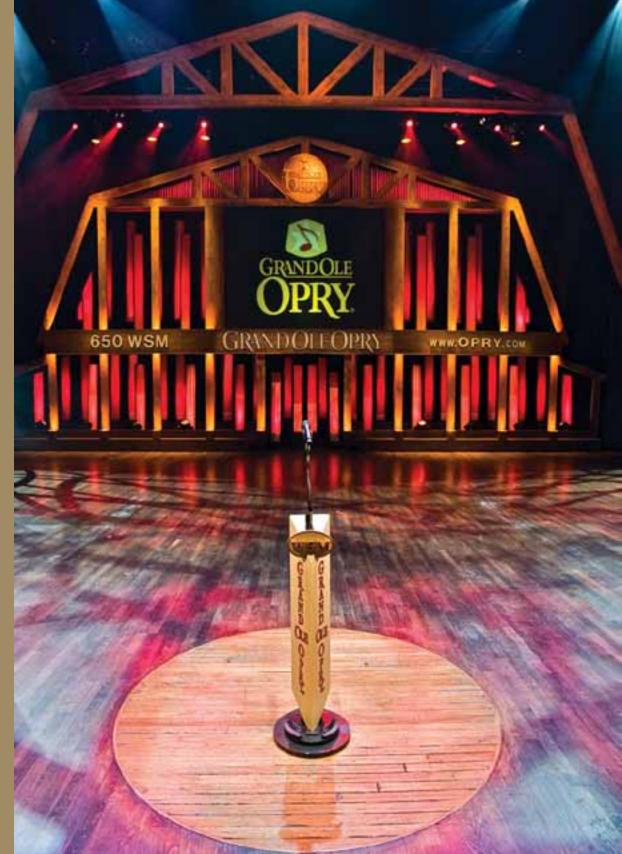






ashville's Darkhorse Theater was a Presbyterian church that is now converted into a 136raked-house theater. Since 1995, Darkhorse Theater has provided a home for Nashville's emergent and independent performing companies with new works, classical theater, live music, dance and multimedia shows. Intimate and comfortable. Darkhorse is one of Nashville's premiere alternative performing spaces. Companies that have mounted works there include ACT 1, Groundworks Theater, Real Life Players, Sista Style, Actors Bridge, Dream 7, Destiny Theatre Experience, P.G. 13 Players, Nairobi Cafe, Rhubarb Theatre, Collards and Caviar, and others. Shannon Wood and Peter Kurland own and manage the Darkhorse. Their mission is to provide a home for indigenous theater and performing arts groups and artists.





hen the Grand Ole Opry left its downtown

Nashville home of thirty-one years at the

Ryman Auditorium, it moved to a new complex

called Opryland. Part of a large development that included an amusement park and an extensive hotel with a conservatory, the Grand Ole Opry House was designed by Welton Beckett and Associates. The stage of the Grand Ole Opry House has a special feature: a six-foot circle of dark, oak wood that is shiny but clearly well worn. Cut from the stage of the Opry's famous former home, the Ryman Auditorium, this circle gives newcomers and veterans alike the opportunity to sing on the same spot that once supported Uncle Dave Macon, Ernest Tubb, Patsy Cline, and others.

"That circle is the most magical thing when you're a performer," said Brad Paisley. "[You get] to stand there and get to sing on those same boards that probably still contain dust from Hank Williams' boots."

The house seats 4,372 audience members. The stage is ninety feet wide by sixty-one feet deep (from the Opry backdrop to the rounded edge of the stage). The entire main auditorium functions as a television studio, and there is a second, smaller television studio in the building as well, Studio A. Since the opening in March 1974, Grand Ole Opry House audiences enjoy a broad scope of entertainment styles by a wide range of artists, all of whom can stand on that wooden circle that is the heart of the stage.







he Little Theatre, circa 1860, is the oldest structure on the Fisk University campus. Erected as part of a Union Army hospital barracks during the Civil War, the building was known first as the "Railroad Hospital." The interior was remodeled for use as the Fisk campus theater in 1935. The Little Theatre – one of the architectural reminders of Fisk's great legacy to the performing, literary, and visual arts – is on the National Register of Historic Places.



Barely six months after the end of the Civil War, and just two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, three men – John Ogden, the Reverend Erastus Milo Cravath, and the Reverend Edward P. Smith – established the Fisk School in 1866 (the following year it became a university) in Nashville, named in honor of General Clinton B. Fisk of the Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau. It was General Fisk who provided the new institution with facilities in former Union Army barracks near the present site of Nashville's Union Station. In these facilities Fisk convened its first classes on January 9, 1866. The first students ranged in age from seven to seventy, but shared common experiences of slavery, poverty, and an extraordinary thirst for learning that has always included the performing arts.



ashville Children's Theatre (NCT) is Tennessee's only professional, non-profit theater dedicated exclusively to children and families. Throughout its history, NCT has introduced young people to the magic of live theater through a full line-up of stage productions and related educational programs.

Established in 1931 by the Junior League of Nashville, NCT is the oldest children's theater company in America. Each year NCT produces four or more professional productions for audiences ranging from pre-school to adults. Every NCT production is brought to life by a team of professional actors, designers, and stage technicians drawn from the finest professional theater artists in the region.

The average NCT season spans thirty-six weeks and features over 200 performances for both school groups and family audiences. Approximately 60,000 school children attend Nashville Children's Theatre performances each year as part of the Theatre's School Performance Series, and an additional 15,000 children and adults visit for the Theatre's Weekend Family Series.

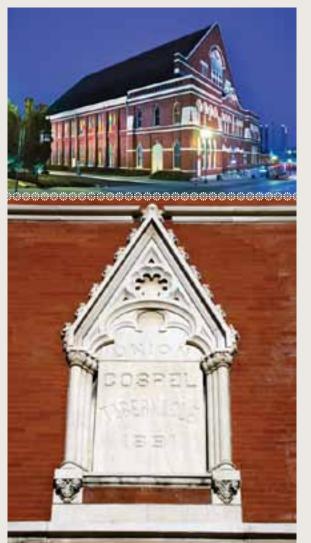
The Children's Theatre's \$6.3 million Capital Campaign, launched in summer 2005, updated the company's 48 year-old facility. In December 2007 to joyous acclaim, NCT opened their newly renovated building offering an expanded lobby and box office; new, more comfortable auditorium seats; additional restrooms; a soundproofed "cry room" for infants with an excellent view of the stage; and improved access for those with disabilities.

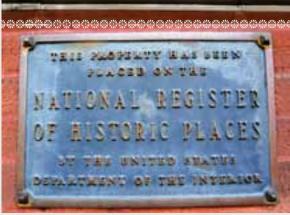


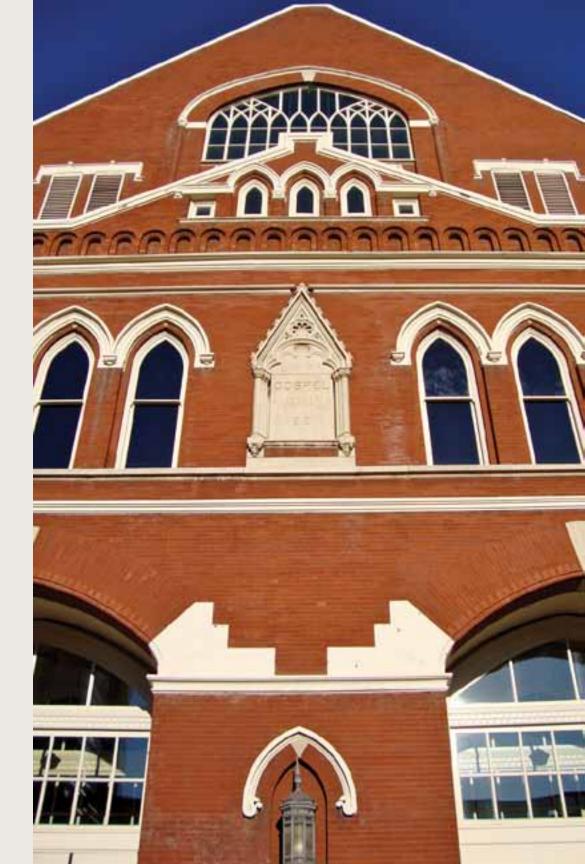
NASHVILLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

25 MIDDLETON STREET * NASHVILLE
DAVIDSON COUNTY









nown then as the Union Gospel Tabernacle, an unfinished Ryman Auditorium first opened its doors in 1890. That revival held under a tented roof was the beginning of a great American tradition. Regarded for more than a century as a community treasure, the Ryman's legacy as an acoustically excellent, authentic, and storied venue continues to grow.

The Ryman is named for Thomas Green Ryman (1841-1904). He was a riverboat entrepreneur who heard Rev. Sam P. Jones (1847-1906) preaching repentance at a Nashville tent revival in 1885. That night Ryman was deeply moved to construct a great building to serve the cause of faith. In 1892 the Union Gospel Tabernacle was declared complete. At his 1904 memorial service in the facility it was renamed in his honor.

Architect Hugh C. Thompson designed the building in the Ruskinian Gothic style. Originally estimated at \$70,000, it cost \$100,000 to complete. For more than six decades Nashvillians enjoyed world class theater, opera, music, dance, and lectures. Manager Lula C. Naff, deserves credit for the exceptional track record from 1915 to 1966.

Most famously known as "The Mother Church of Country Music," the Ryman was home to the Grand Ole Opry from 1943 to 1974. Renovated by the Gaylord Company in 1994, the Ryman was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2001 and continues to serve as a premier, legendary performance venue.



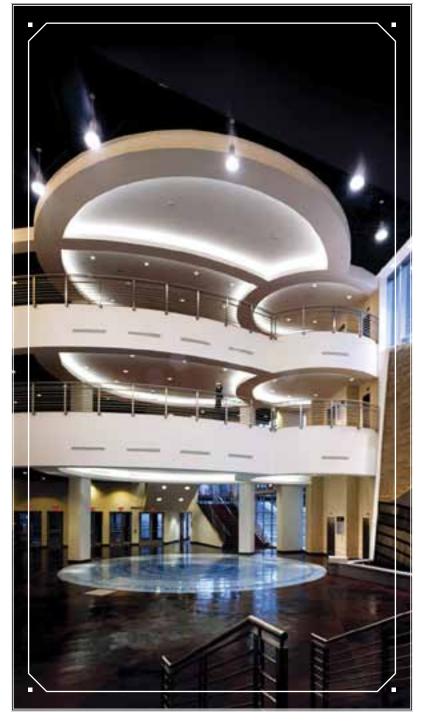




n a thunderous explosion on June 13, 1971 a Nashville landmark fell to the ground. The demolished Andrew Jackson Hotel made way for a new landmark, the Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC). TPAC came into being because a group of private citizens, led by Martha Ingram, proposed an arts center to the state legislature. Funding was approved only after a private fundraising effort established an endowment of more than \$4 million.

TPAC is located in the James K. Polk Cultural Center in downtown Nashville, occupying the entire block between 5th and 6th Avenues and Deaderick and Union Streets. The Polk Center also houses the Tennessee State Museum, and the cultural center adjoins the eighteen-story James K. Polk Office Tower.

The performance venues at TPAC, completed in 1980, are Andrew Jackson Hall (2,472 seats), James K. Polk Theater (1,075), Andrew Johnson Theater (256 seats), a below ground level black box experimental space, and War Memorial Auditorium (1,661 seats – please see separate entry), the historic landmark located across 6th Avenue and the plaza from the Center. TPAC also hosts three resident performing arts organizations: Nashville Ballet, Nashville Opera, and Tennessee Repertory Theatre. Presenting their work on the stages of TPAC, all of these organizations are however independent of the center. TPAC also administers one of the nation's largest, strongest, and most comprehensive arts-in-education programs in the United States.









ar Memorial Auditorium is a part of the War Memorial Building that was completed in 1925. The three-story neo-Classical limestone structure was designed by McKim, Mead & White with Edward Daugherty as a local associate. This historic landmark sits across from the 6th Avenue entrance to the Tennessee Performing Arts Center (TPAC).

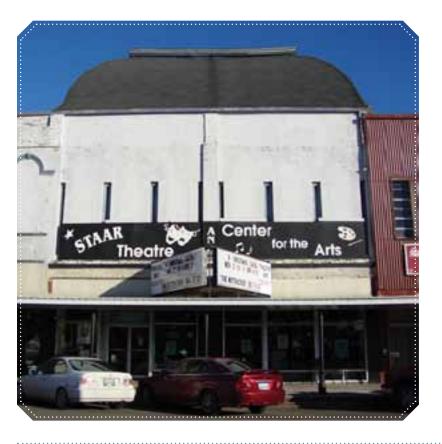
The sixty-six-foot by fifty-two-foot expandable crescent-shaped stage contributes to the auditorium's superb acoustics. This facility has been renovated to function as a multi-purpose space, and it offers the flexibility of theatrical, or cabaret and banquet seating on the orchestra level. The 1,668-seat venue is outfitted with a house sound system and lighting. The lower level of the War Memorial building houses a military history museum under the auspices of the Tennessee State Museum.

A historic landmark overseen by TPAC, the War Memorial Auditorium lends itself well to meetings, concerts, and theatrical productions. It has a strong history including hosting the Grand Ole Opry from 1939-1943. It is the original home of Charlie Daniels' Volunteer Jam, and several live albums have been recorded in the site, primarily because of the room's excellent acoustics. Presidential candidates Kennedy, Nixon, and Humphry spoke on the War Memorial Building steps, as did President Lyndon Johnson. Artists who have performed on stage include Jerry Lee Lewis, Elvis Costello, Liza Minelli, David Bowie, Barry Manilow, Lou Reed, Old Crow Medicine Show, and David Sedaris.







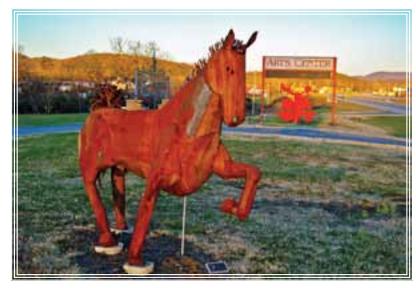


eginning in 1868 people in Giles County enjoyed theatrical productions at the Opera House on Pulaski's town square, also known as Antoinette Hall. Reportedly the oldest standing opera house in the South, the building has recently received new enthusiasm. It now serves as the home base for the Southern Tennessee Area Arts Repertory (STAAR).

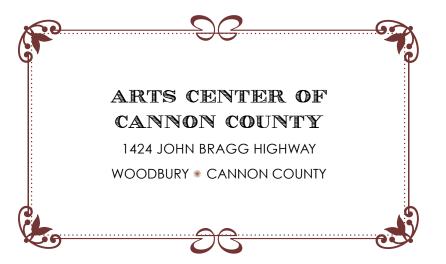
The nonprofit community theater organization presents a different play or musical every six weeks. STAAR is currently performing in the basement of the building, which the group has transformed into a dinner theater with approximately 100 seats. STAAR has about 200 members, including young children, teenagers and adults.

Tammy Pierchoski, past president and financial developer for STAAR related, "Our 10-year plan is to restore it. It's such a jewel on our square, and walking into it is like walking onto the Titanic – it's just awesome."

The building has enjoyed many years of prosperity. It served as an opera house until the 1940s and featured extraordinary architecture, including intricate woodwork and a domed ceiling. "We have photos of people performing on stage there from 1925," Pierchoski says. "Estimates to restore it have been around \$1.5 million... We've had tremendous support, so that's been encouraging," she says. "It looks like theater is alive and well in Giles County." (Based on a story by Jessica Mozo.)







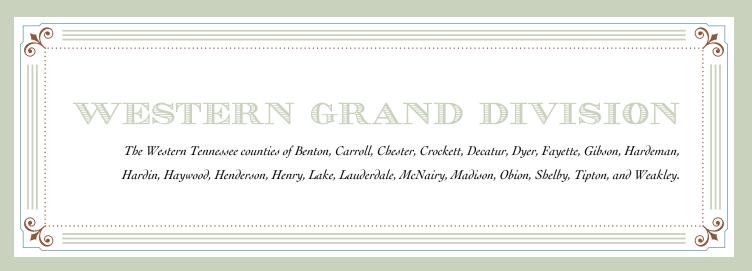
estled in the rolling hills of scenic Middle Tennessee, Woodbury is the seat of Cannon County, a small rural community with a big arts heritage. The county's long tradition of white oak basket and chair-making has gained the attention of collectors and museums worldwide, including the Tennessee State Museum, the Smithsonian Institution, and The Museum of Folk Culture in Hunan Province in China.

In 1992 the community won the Tennessee Governor's Award in the Arts for supporting the construction of a permanent multi-functional arts center to bolster the local crafts industry and a flourishing community theater scene.

Since then The Arts Center of Cannon County has become a model for what communities can accomplish when they pull together toward a common goal. Annual attendance at the Arts Center grew from 2,000 in 1991 to over 37,000 in 2000.

The Arts Center now serves over 100 craft artists, 400 performing artists, and more than 19,000 students annually in its recently expanded facility. Because of The Arts Center's success and the community's rich craft heritage, Woodbury was included in John Villani's book *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America*. Musical performances complement the Art Center's on-going theatrical season.





HISTORIC RUFFIN THEATER (Covington) {50}
BEMIS MILL VILLAGE MUSEUM (Jackson) {51}

CARNEGIE CENTER FOR ARTS AND HISTORY (Jackson) {52}

EVERGREEN THEATRE (Memphis) {53}

NEW DAISY THEATRE (Memphis) {54}

LEVITT SHELL (Memphis) {55}

ORPHEUM THEATRE (Memphis) {56}

THEATRE MEMPHIS (Memphis) {58}

CIRCUIT THEATRE (Memphis) {59}

THEATREWORKS (Memphis) {60}

STRAND THEATRE (Millington) {61}

CAPITOL THEATRE (Union City) [62]





uilt in the 1920s as the Palace Theater, the original structure burned down. William F. Ruffin added it to his collection of theaters, rebuilt it, and named it after himself. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1992 and has undergone several renovations through the years. Some of those facelifts modified it from its humble beginnings as a motion picture house to a full-fledged 614-seat theater with a large stage. Over the years many notable figures have performed here including Elvis Presley.

Now equipped with a freshly redesigned lighting system and a new state-of-the-art thirty-two channel sound system, the Historic Ruffin Theater can accommodate anything from a major stage production to a large concert.

Community theater is a big part of the Historic Ruffin Theater, with recent productions such as Pillow Talk, Little Women, A Christmas Carol, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and many others. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the frequent auditions for plays. The Ruffin Theater hosts many musical events from all genres, including a bluegrass series on the first Friday of every month, a symphony program, and variety shows of all kinds. The Historic Ruffin Theater also plays host to many yearly events like "Colgate Country Showdown" and "Miss Tipton County Pageants." The Tipton Arts Council, Inc. operates the Historic Ruffin Theater.

ationally renowned architect Andrew Hepburn designed the Bemis Auditorium. The elegant Beaux Arts building, constructed in 1921-22, was intended to be a community gathering place. Fulfilling its promise, the facility hosted the Bemis High School and J.B. Young High School plays, baccalaureate programs, and graduation ceremonies. To the delight of children and adults, many traveling acts such as magicians also performed here. A Christmas show was a community staple for many years. The facility also doubled as a movie theater six afternoons and nights a week.

Soon after opening, the Bemis Company contracted to have professional acting companies – complete with scenery, costumes, and sets – to perform annually using local extras after two weeks of rehearsal. Helen Keller was one of the most famous personalities to take the Bemis stage. Giving her famous inspirational performance of 1936, she sang, played the piano, and gave a motivational speech. In the early 1950s Johnny Cash performed, but the Bemis audience preferred its own rockabilly legend Carl Perkins who played that same night.

Part of a collection of Bemis buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, the auditorium was completely restored beginning in 2000. The building contains a local history museum as well as a performance space.





BEMIS MILL VILLAGE MUSEUM

{ FORMERLY THE BEMIS AUDITORIUM }

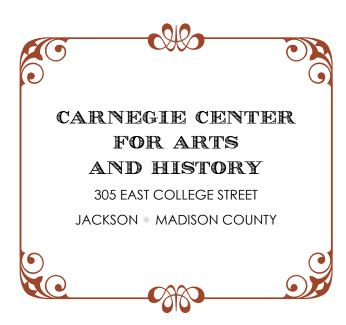
2 NORTH MISSOURI STREET

JACKSON * MADISON COUNTY









he present Carnegie Center for Arts and History, located in downtown Jackson, opened in 1903 as the Jackson Free Library. It was then the town's first library, financed by Jackson City Council funds and a matching \$30,000 grant from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. In 1968 the newer larger Jackson-Madison County Library replaced the Carnegie and the older library building fell into disrepair until 1987.

The Jackson Recreation and Parks Department restored the Carnegie to its original beauty and usefulness to serve the city and surrounding area as an art and history center. Additional funding for the restoration and renovation of the building and grounds was obtained through generous community contributions.

Officially dedicated on November 18, 1988, the opening was preceded by a month-long series of live theater, performed poetry, an arts and crafts show, an art exhibit, a photograph display, concerts, children's story hours, a gourmet dinner and wine-tasting, and a slide presentation showing the steps of Carnegie's reclamation.

The facility serves as a gathering place for many groups including weddings, receptions, teas, luncheons, fashion shows, recitals, musical programs, art showings, collectors' exhibits, business meetings, class reunions, and various other events.







uilt in 1920 as the Ritz, the theater was on the Bijou film circuit. In the 1950s it developed a new identity as the Guild Theatre and screened art house movies by the likes of Bergman and Fellini. A former ticket taker recalled that around 1966 the Guild showed "underground movies" at midnight. Because it was illegal in Memphis to start a public movie after midnight, for those screenings the theater became a private club with a twenty-five cent lifetime membership fee.

In 1979 the theater became Circuit Playhouse, known for staging Off-Broadway and experimental works. According to *cinematreasures.org*, "The Circuit Playhouse was a magnificent example of the adaptive reuse of an historic building: it was extensively remodeled to accommodate live theater. The original stage and pipe organ chamber still existed and became part of the rehearsal hall. A costume shop, dressing rooms, and storage fit into the space closest to the screen. It should be noted that under Jackie Nichols direction, Playhouse-On-The-Square and its sister facility, Circuit Playhouse, provide live theatre of the absolute highest quality."

The 2010 opening of Playhouse on the Square's new facility set in motion a good domino effect. Playhouse moved the Circuit operation into the old Playhouse on the Square building. The then-empty old Circuit Theatre became known as the Evergreen Theatre. Theatreworks leases it from Playhouse on the Square for one dollar a year and books diverse and emerging performing artists and companies.





uilt in 1941 across the street from the historic Daisy Theatre, the New Daisy was the most modern theater on Memphis' famous Beale Street, a self-contained enclave that then catered primarily to African-Americans. With the revitalization of Beale Street as a premier tourist destination, now the New Daisy has a vital contemporary life.

According to Frommer's online Guide to Memphis, "The stage at the New Daisy has long been the place to see regional and national rock bands, but these days the theater books a surprisingly wide variety of entertainment, from boxing matches to the touring alternative-rock bands. Bob Dylan filmed a video here from his Grammy-winning *Time Out of Mind* CD (fitting, because Memphis musicians were featured on that work). More recent acts to have played the venue include hometown heroes Justin Timberlake and the North Mississippi Allstars."

he City of Memphis and the Works Progress Administration built the Overton Park Shell in 1936 for \$11,935. Architect Max Furbringer designed it after similar band shells in Chicago, New York and St. Louis. During the 1930s-40s the Shell staged the Memphis Open Air Theater (MOAT) orchestra performances, light opera, and musicals. In 1947 the Memphis Federation of Musicians launched its free Music under the Stars series. On July 30, 1954 Elvis Presley took the stage before headliner Slim Whitman. Elvis stole the audience's affection in the Shell's debut rock and roll show.

In the 1960s, the Memphis Arts Center, Inc., planned to raze the Shell and build a theater. Conductor of the Memphis Concert Orchestra Noel Gilbert organized a petition with 6,000 signatures to save the Shell. In 1972, it was almost demolished for a parking garage. In 1984, the parking lot plan began to move forward again. John Hanrahan led the fight to preserve it, but efforts stalled. In the summer of 1985, the Shell lay dormant for the first time. After Hanrahan died in 1986, his friends and family formed Save Our Shell, Inc. and the Shell enjoyed a rebirth. In 2007, the Shell was renovated and renamed Levitt Shell at Overton Park. It opened again with free music for all on September 4, 2008. (Photo courtesy of Levitt Shell.)







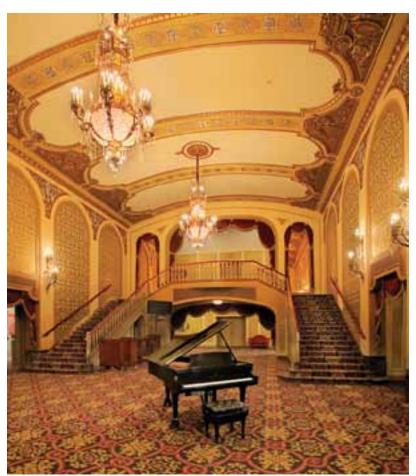
n 1890 the Grand Opera House arose on the corner of Memphis' Main and Beale Streets. In 1907 the Grand joined the Orpheum Circuit of vaudeville shows, thus becoming known as the Orpheum. Vaudeville at the Orpheum was successful for almost two decades until a 1923 fire leveled the structure.

At a cost of \$1.6 million, a new Orpheum was built in 1928 in French Renaissance style on the original site of the Grand. It was twice as large and opulently decorated with lavish tasseled brocade draperies, enormous crystal chandeliers, gilded moldings, and a Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ.

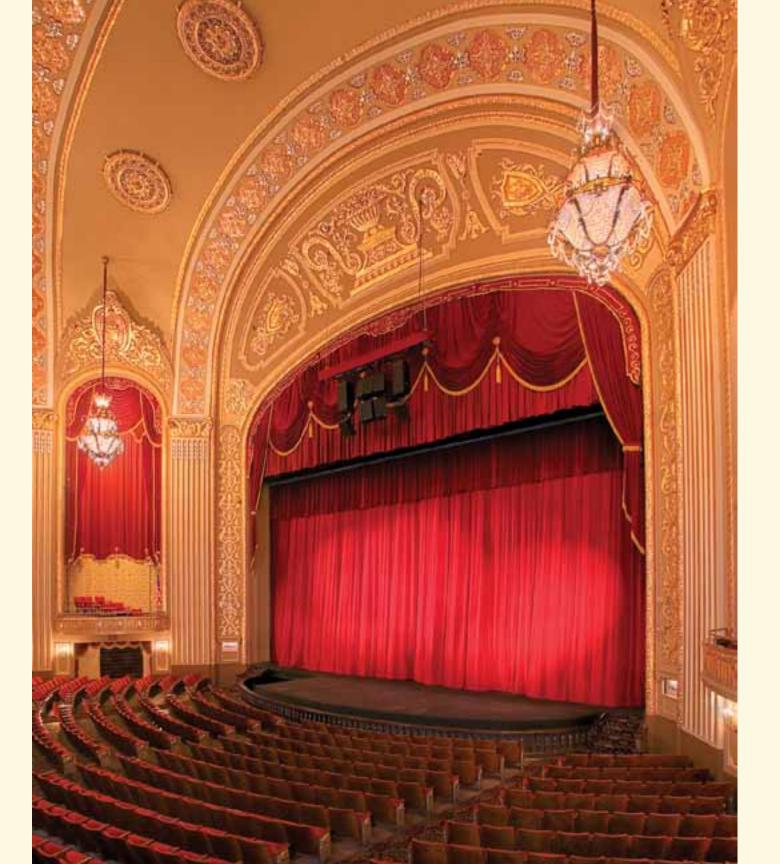
Vaudeville waned, and in 1940 the Malco movie theater chain purchased the Orpheum and screened first run movies. By 1976 there was talk of demolition, but in 1977 the Memphis Development Foundation purchased the Orpheum to import Broadway productions and concerts.

The Orpheum closed in 1982 for a \$5 million renovation to restore its 1928 opulence. The grand reopening in January 1984 signaled a rebirth in downtown Memphis.

The Memphis Development Foundation manages the Orpheum, now on the National Register of Historic Places, and presents ten to twelve Broadway shows each year. Ballet Memphis and Opera Memphis also call it home. In 2008 the Orpheum Theatre celebrate its 80th anniversary. No doubt Mary, the Orpheum's legendary ghost – a little girl in a white dress and pigtails who for decades has sat quietly in seat C-5 Box 5 with blank stare and ethereal appearance – is pleased. (Photos courtesy of Doug Hill.)

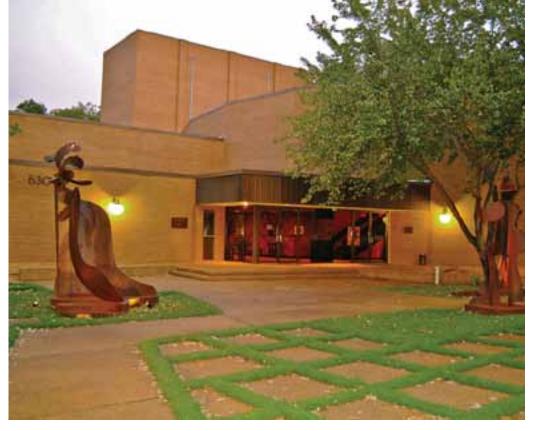








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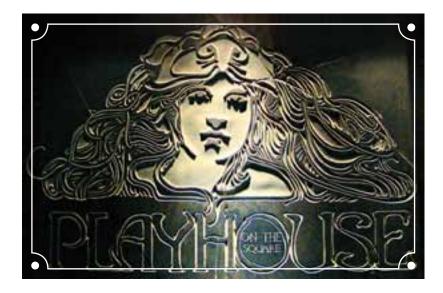


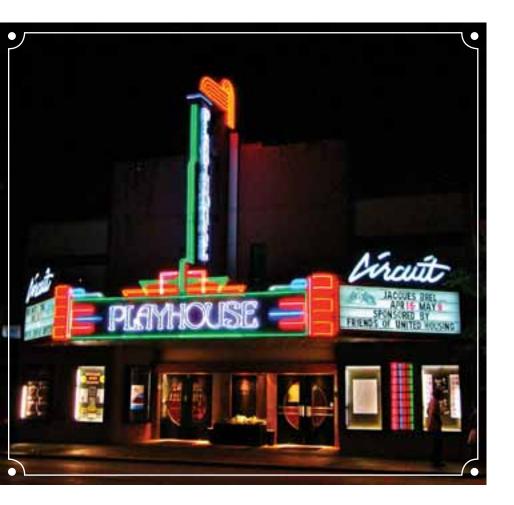
he idea for what has become one of the oldest and most successful community theaters in the country was born in 1920 by friends who gathered for the December holiday season. On May 20, 1921 their first performance consisted of three one-act plays.

Theatre Memphis' first permanent home, founded in 1925, was a former stable. In 1929 it moved into the east wing of The Pink Palace where it remained for forty-six years. This 272-seat theater, built on the sloping concrete of the never-used indoor swimming pool, was part of Piggly Wiggly founder Clarence Saunders' mansion.

Eugart Yerian, a graduate of the Pasadena Playhouse in California, assumed the theater director's job from 1932-1961. Sherwood Lohrey first appeared as a guest director for *Under the Yum Yum Tree* and was immediately hired to fill Yerian's vacancy. From 1962 until he retired in 1995, Lohrey instituted the annual production of *A Christmas Carol*; programmed musicals and more serious plays plus classical works; increased the professional staff from one to twenty four; and established the new substantial home for the theater, including a small house for less mainstream plays, on Perkins Extended.











uilt as the Memphian Theatre in 1935, this Art Moderne-style house now enjoys a robust life as a home for a premier professional Memphis theater group. The old Memphian, however, was no stranger to entertainers. Unable to watch movies with the public, after midnight Elvis Presley rented this theater (and others) where he and his crowd watched movies until dawn. The story goes that the Memphian was his favorite and he always sat in the same seat.

After it closed in the late 1970s as a standard movie theater, the old Memphian did a six-month stint as a pornographic films house until home video destroyed that market. For a kind price, owner Danny Oman sold the Memphian in 1985. With a \$150,000 renovation it became Playhouse on the Square presenting legitimate theater. In 1992, Playhouse on the Square acquired an adjoining building adding 6,000 square feet and added a new scene shop, a large multi-purpose room with a bar, a meeting room, and wheelchair-accessible restrooms.

In 2010 the Memphian-Playhouse on the Square changed names again to become home to Circuit Theatre's productions.







heatreworks is both a venue and an organization. The contemporary-styled structure is an experimental black box space located in the mid-town Memphis theater district. The organization has a noble mission: "to provide an atmosphere of support where artists are free to produce non-commercial work and to succeed or fail without fear and without financial strain."

Theatreworks has five resident companies who enjoy low-cost office, rehearsal, and priority performance booking privileges. Ballet on Wheels Dance School & Company fosters appreciation of classical ballet through art education and performance opportunities to children of diverse backgrounds. The Bluff City Tri-Art Theatre Company features new and classical works that especially focus on the concerns of women. Emerald Theatre Company concentrates on contemporary, cutting edge works that would not ordinarily be staged in conventional Memphis venues. New Moon Theatre Company's offerings focus on daring directorial and design choices that capitalize on the black box environment. Our Own Voice Theatre Company, founded in 1991, serves to increase the dialogue about mental health issues. Project Motion, a modern dance collective, choreographs and presents original high quality works.

In 2010 Theatreworks organization took over the management of the proscenium-stage Evergreen Theatre (formerly Circuit Theatre). With this addition, booking pressures on the Theatreworks building, typically two years in advance, will be eased, and artists can chose the staging style – black box or proscenium – that best suits their production.







uilt in 1939, the Strand Theatre in Millington was originally a movie house. But for some years now every Saturday night it's the home of "Billy Owen's All American Band" and the "Country Music Showcase." Guest singers as well as a variety of regulars make music from 8:00pm until about 11:30pm.

Friday nights the Strand is host to gospel music, plus the special shows that are occasionally booked there. Auditions for Saturday night's singers are typically held on Thursday nights starting about 6:00pm. To try out just drop by and place your name on the audition sheet. If you sing well enough you'll have a place on the Saturday night show.

The Strand Theatre is a family entertainment venue. It does not serve alcohol and maintains a "home town" atmosphere. In recent years the Strand added a small dance floor in front of the stage multiplying its amusement options to include playing, singing, dancing, listening, and watching fine home-style entertainment in the making.





he historic Capitol Theatre opened April 11, 1927. The architect was William Joseph Conradi who lived in Union City until 1934. Designed as a multi-purpose venue, the Capitol presented Paramount, MGM, and Fox movies, Vaudeville acts (Keith Circuit), musical comedies, and road show attractions. Special guests at the Capitol included *Our Gang's* Freckles and Gene Autry. Mr. Autry performed trick shooting and rode his horse Champion onto the stage to delight the standing-room-only crowd.

The Capitol's original capacity was 725 on the main floor and 100 in the balcony. It operated continuously until 1981 when it became a twin cinema showing first and second run movies. It closed in 1991.

In 1996 the local community company, Masquerade Theatre, purchased the Capitol. Renovations restored the original single auditorium and reconstructed the stage floor and over-stage rigging system. The Capitol reopened in 1998 for two weeks of sold-out performances with a revival production of *Guys and Dolls*.

The current theater has 362 stadium-style seats; computer lighting and sound control systems; counterweight fly rigging; and motorized drives for revolving scenery. Preserved design elements include the Art Deco glass exterior of the building and "cold-themed" interior decorations (The Capitol installed air-conditioning in 1939). The ticket cage for the box office came from the Roxy Theatre (formerly across the street). The Capitol Theatre is listed with the National Register of Historic Places.



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